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HOUSEHOLD PESTS -- METHODS OF CONTROL

A conversation between Morse Salisbury, Associate Director of Information, and Josephine Hemphill, Radio Service, broadcast Tuesday, May 2, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture portion of the National Farm and Home program, by 104 stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company.

--ooOoo--

WALLACE KADDERLY:

And here are Josephine Hemphill and Morse Salisbury, all ready for the bug broadcast of 1939. They've been talking with the entomologists, and they have the latest up-to-date information available on how to control the clothes moth, silverfish, little red ants, big yellow ants, large black ants, cockroaches, fleas—all the members of that pestiferous crew that creep and crawl, and buzz, and bite, and chirp -- and make life miserable for us human beings.

JOSEPHINE HEMPHILL:

Wallace, you're getting yourself all worked up.

MORSE SALISBURY:

Calm down, Wallace.

"For every insect under the sun,
There is a remedy -- or there is none."

HEMPHILL:

"If there is one --"

SALISBURY:

"Try to find it --"

KADDERLY:

"Try to find it" is right! Just try!

HEMPHILL:

Why what's the matter?

KADDERLY:

Say, did you every try to locate a cricket, chirping its fool head off behind the radiator in your office?

HEMPHILL:

Trying to bring a little sunshine into your life.

SALISBURY:

Wallace, you sit over there on the green plush sofa -- and listen to us. We can solve your problem. We're authorities, pro tem., on insect control -- through the courtesy of Dr. E. A. Back, of the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine. We have here a list of popular fallacies about bugs, and we're going to set you right, on a good many things.

KADDERLY:

But I want to know only one thing -- how to get rid of a chirping cricket.

(over)

SALISBURY:

That will be taken care of, in due time.

KADDERLY:

Is that a promise?

SALISBURY:

Sure. First question, Miss Hemphill?

HEMPHILL:

Is it true that bedbugs live in trees?

SALISBURY:

You know where they live. How do you think they come by their name?

HEMPHILL:

But many people honestly believe they live in trees, get into houses from trees--that they live in pine lumber. Is there any basis for this belief?

SALISBURY:

Yes. It's true -- this bug does get on chickens sometimes, then the chickens may roost in trees, and the insect may get under the bark. As for bed-bugs in pine lumber -- that's nonsense. Of course it's possible that a house may be built of second hand lumber, from an infested house. But these insects are not partial to pine -- nor to any other lumber used in building houses.

HEMPHILL:

I know you're right, but for the sake of the argument -- I have a letter from a woman who states positively these insects were in the new lumber their house was built of. She found them in the attic -- and nowhere else. What's the explanation?

SALISBURY:

Well, maybe they were bat bugs.

HEMPHILL:

Oh. How do you combat -- the bat bug?

SALISBURY:

Keep the bats out of your attic. Plug up the holes in the attic, so bats can't fly in -- and you won't have bat-bugs. What's your next question?

HEMPHILL:

This is about ants. Is there any one bait you can depend on to destroy all kinds of house ants?

SALISBURY:

There is not. Read the bulletin, if you want to know how to control all the different species of house ants. Next?

HEMPHILL:

Next we come to the clothes moth. Does the clothes moth eat cotton, linen, rayon, silk?

SALISBURY:

Absolutely not.

HEMPHILL:

Does the clothes moth eat the woolen threads from a fabric of silk and wool, or cotton and wool?

SALISBURY:

Absolutely yes. And in so doing they may cut some of the vegetable fibers.

HEMPHILL:

Is there any solution on the market that will absolutely and permanently mothproof a fabric?

SALISBURY:

There is not.

HEMPHILL:

Is cold storage a good protection for furs, woolens, rugs, upholstered furniture?

SALISBURY:

Excellent.

HEMPHILL:

Will a temperature of 125 or 130 degrees destroy the clothes moth?

SALISBURY:

Yes. In hot summer weather, some people heat their entire houses to 120 -- 130 degrees. It takes about 12 hours to get this superheat everywhere in the ordinary house. It destroys moths, bedbugs, and carpet beetles.

HEMPHILL:

Sounds like a good idea. Is the clothes moth affected -- adversely -- by the smell of cedar oil, pine oil, tobacco, lavender flowers, spices, printer's ink?

SALISBURY:

Not a single one of these things has any affect on the clothes moth.

HEMPHILL:

Will a chest of red cedar protect clothing from moth damage?

SALISBURY:

Yes -- if it's the right kind of cedar chest.

HEMPHILL:

What is the right kind?

SALISBURY:

Listen carefully. If you want a cedar chest that you can depend on to protect your clothing from moth attack, get a chest of red cedar (Juniperus virginiana) made of 3/4 inch heartwood, to the extent of 70 percent of the chest proper.

HEMPHILL:

All right. Now, -

SALISBURY:

Wait a minute! I'm not through. A cedar chest of the specifications I've given will protect clothing if the chest is tight, and in good condition, and if the clothing is brushed carefully just before it's placed in the chest.

HEMPHILL:

That sounds reasonable. Can you depend on a chest lined with a thin veneer of red cedar?

SALISBURY:

No, you can not. Follow the specifications for a cedar chest given in Doctor Back's leaflet on moth control. By the way, Miss Hemphill, I heard you say you have no trouble at all, keeping your winter clothes free from moths. How do you do it?

HEMPHILL:

Very simple. I store winter clothing and wool blankets in trunks and wooden boxes.

SALISBURY:

And they remain in perfect condition?

HEMPHILL:

Perfect. Between the folds of the clothing -- between the sheets of thin tissue paper -- I scatter one pound of flake napthalene. Paradichlorobenzene would do just as well. Of course I keep the trunks and boxes tightly closed, so no wandering moth can enter.

SALISBURY:

One pound, you say.

HEMPHILL:

That's right.

SALISBURY:

Of flake napthlene or paradichlorobenzene.

HEMPHILL:

That's what I use. Four ounces is really enough, but both these chemicals are cheap, so I just put in a whole pound -- to be on the safe side. That's all explained in the leaflet on moth control.

SALISBURY:

One more question. Is it true that damage from silverfish is increasing?

HEMPHILL:

I'm afraid that's true.

SALISBURY:

What's the reason?

HEMPHILL:

Well, we have more evenly heated houses -- and silverfish like a nice warm home. They eat books, lace curtains -- they're especially fond of rayon. Morse, our time's up, and we haven't mentioned fleas and cockroaches.

KADDERLY:

Look here--what about my cricket?

HEMPHILL:

And what about Wallace Kadderly's cricket?

SALISBURY:

Well, what about it, Josephine?

HEMPHILL:

(Did we forget to ask about crickets?)

SALISBURY:

(I am afraid we did.) Wallace, if you want to find out how to control your cricket, I guess you'll have to write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and ask for help. You can't expect us to know everything.

HEMPHILL:

Not everything, Wallace.

KADDERLY:

Look here, Jo. Am I to understand that you will do a faithful job of reporting for people annoyed by carpet beetles, house ants, termites, clothes moths--

HEMPHILL:

Oh, I'll get you information on crickets. Right away.

KADDERLY:

Just a minute. Before you leave, let's check up on the control leaflets. There's the Clothes Moth leaflet, the Silverfish leaflet --

SALISBURY:

How to Control Fleas -- Cat, Dog, and Human.

HEMPHILL:

How to Control Cockroaches, Bedbugs, House Ants.

KADDERLY:

And Termites. Is that the list?

SALISBURY:

That's it.

HEMPHILL:

Correct.

KADDERLY:

All right, Farm and Home folks -- if you want information on how to get rid of any of these pests -- termites, clothes moths, silverfish, fleas, cockroaches, bedbugs, house ants -- write to the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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